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Official Records

First Committee

8th Meeting
Monday, 20 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 1.10 p.m.

Election of the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur

The Chairman: As you will recall, at the organizational meeting held on 9 October, the Committee was unable to take up the item of election of other members of the Bureau because consultations were still continuing among the regional groups concerned.

As a result of extensive consultations during the past week, I am pleased to inform you that the regional groups concerned have now reached an agreement on the arrangements for those posts. In this regard, I call on the representative of Azerbaijan, Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States for the month of October.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I have the honour to inform you, Sir, and through you the colleagues in the First Committee, that the Republic of Belarus has decided to withdraw its candidature to one of the posts of Vice-Chairperson of the Committee. I express my confidence that this constructive action by a member of the Eastern European Group will be duly taken into consideration at the next session, next year.

I wish you, Sir, and all the members of the Bureau to be elected shortly, all the best of success in conducting your duties.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) *(interpretation from Russian)*: We have already had an opportunity to assure you here of our readiness to promote the successful work of the First Committee under your leadership.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus, as you know, has shown its readiness from the very outset of our work in the First Committee, knowing from practice how responsible and complex the role of the Chairman of the Committee is and how important it is for him, in carrying out his work, to be able to rely fully on the experience of all regions and individual countries which have the appropriate competence.

The choice of the members of the Bureau of the Committee is one of the most important questions from that point of view. It requires precise interaction between regional groups, taking account of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and existing traditions and norms, with retrospective analysis of precedents and assessment of the situation for the future at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

In any case, under conditions when the number of elected posts in the Bureau for each of the Main Committees does not coincide with the number of regional groups, from year to year we have to make sure that we constantly strengthen those elected posts and that they are in fact held by particular regions. We hope that the representatives of all of the regional groups will agree with us that the principle of rotation — *inter alia* regarding the levels of the posts — in these conditions plays an extremely important role.

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Acting on the basis of the rules of procedure, in particular the provisions of rule 103, the delegation of Belarus has proceeded in accordance with the appropriate distribution of elected posts among the regional groups, taking into account also the situation of the past years and at the present session of the General Assembly. At the same time, we note with regret that not all of the participants have, in fact, always had a balanced approach to the issue during the course of the consultations which took place on this question over the last few days, in the light of the need for balanced representation of regional groups on the level of these elected posts, for the General Committee of the General Assembly and for the bureaus of the Main Committees.

As a consequence, and regarding the distribution of elected posts in the various categories, the Eastern European Group is the most under-represented regional group at the present session of the General Assembly. In our view, this could create an undesirable backdrop for future sessions of the General Assembly and complicate the work of balancing representation of regional groups in the elective bodies. We would not like to have such a situation become a precedent or a basis for violating the accepted principles of just geographical representation of elective posts in the General Assembly.

Acting in a spirit of good will, and in the light of the existing specific situation in the First Committee, I should like once again — as has always been characteristic of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus on a whole number of other specific questions, including those which have a most direct bearing on the disarmament issues — to demonstrate our constructive approach. Bearing in mind the need for the work of the Committee to proceed smoothly and to avoid a repetition of a situation which has occurred in other committees, Belarus has withdrawn its candidacy for the post of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee for the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. We hope that this step will be given due attention by the other regional groups during the course of the next sessions of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm that the delegation of the Republic of Belarus is ready to support the spirit of consensus, smooth work and effective joint efforts of Member States.

The Chairman: I have been informed that the Western European Group has also withdrawn the candidature of the Netherlands for the post of Vice-Chairman.

Having heard the statement by the representatives of Azerbaijan and Belarus, I understand that the Group of Asian States has nominated Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia to the post of Vice-Chairman. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Mr. Alejandro Verdier of Argentina to the post of Vice-Chairman. The Group of Eastern European States has nominated Mr. Miloš Koterec of the Slovak Republic to the post of Rapporteur.

Since there is an agreement on this arrangement among the regional groups concerned, I shall take it that, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and established practice, the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and declare Mr. Parnohadiningrat of Indonesia and Mr. Verdier of Argentina elected Vice-Chairmen and Mr. Koterec of the Slovak Republic elected as Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I would like to express my congratulations to Mr. Parnohadiningrat and Mr. Verdier on their election as Vice Chairmen and to Mr. Koterec on his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee. I am sure that, with their profound experience in the disarmament field, they will make a great contribution to the work of the Committee. I have no doubt that I can count on their cooperation throughout the session.

Agenda items 62 to 82 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Cissé (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Mali, to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am convinced that your outstanding skills as a diplomat and your great experience will make it possible for you to discharge this duty with distinction.

We also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

You may rest assured, Sir, of the full support of my delegation in the discharge of your noble duties.

The international community has good reason to feel satisfied about the joint efforts made in recent years to

construct a system of collective security free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, particularly by reducing nuclear arsenals, banning and destroying chemical weapons, and raising the prospect of eliminating anti-personnel landmines. But the goal of general and complete disarmament remains to be reached.

My delegation welcomed the decisions at the last Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regarding the Treaty's indefinite extension. We hope that the next Conference, scheduled for the year 2000, will eliminate once and for all this type of weapon, capable of annihilating all life on our planet.

Last year's signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a decisive step forward in the nuclear disarmament process.

Similarly, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in several parts of the world, by means of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok, strengthens the determination of the peoples of those regions to live in a world rid for ever of nuclear weapons.

The entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention sets the standard for a new kind of multilateral accord that not only prohibits an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, but also — and above all — involves the destruction of existing stocks.

My delegation also notes with satisfaction the positive developments in the negotiations on the Biological Weapons Convention.

Praiseworthy disarmament efforts have been made with regard to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, but, with the exception of anti-personnel landmines, the area of conventional weapons remains unexplored and has not been subject to international norms.

My delegation welcomes the results of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which led to the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. But we share the view of the Secretary-General that the lack of any norms governing conventional weapons — particularly light weapons and small arms — is a matter of increasing concern. Mali has therefore shown its commitment to the fight against the proliferation of small arms by concrete initiatives at the international, regional and national levels.

We pay tribute to all the delegations that co-sponsored resolution 51/45 L, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them." This initiative has contributed to the emergence in the United Nations of the notion of micro-disarmament, designed to draw the attention of the international community to the disastrous consequences of small arms, particularly in developing countries, where these arms fan the flames of conflict. It is very important urgently to support the efforts of countries in the Sahelo-Saharan subregion to contain the phenomenon of small-arms proliferation.

My delegation, together with the same co-sponsors, will soon be submitting a draft resolution on the same subject. We hope to be able to enjoy the understanding of all delegations that regard the proliferation of small arms as a source of insecurity and instability in developing countries, where they nullify all efforts to achieve economic and social development.

In this same vein, the Government of Mali — together with the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) — organized in Mali from 24 to 28 March 1997 a Peace Week, during which the first year of the "Flame of Peace" was celebrated. An international forum of representatives of the countries of the subregion and of the institutions and agencies that I have just mentioned made it possible during the week to identify the causes of the proliferation of light weapons in the subregion and to draw up measures to combat it.

The causes of this phenomenon include the struggle for power; failure to respect democratic principles; the threat of religious fundamentalism; refusal to recognize some social groups; rejection of the idea of alternation of power; poor governance; inability of the State to guarantee the security of its citizens; and the porosity of borders.

In order to combat the scourge of proliferation, the Forum recommended the establishment of a security system integrated within the framework of economic and social development; the revision and harmonizing of legal instruments; the strengthening of the border-monitoring system; the creation of registries at the national and subregional levels; the assistance of the international community to countries requesting it; national and regional training for uniformed police; the opportunity to participate collectively or individually in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms; good governance; the elaboration of a programme for a culture of peace; the institution of the

rule of law; and respect for and the promotion of democracy.

The Forum also appealed to the international community to join with States in their struggle against the proliferation of light weapons, since most of them are facing economic difficulties as well. And lastly, the Forum recommended the implementation of a moratorium on the export, import manufacturing of light weapons in the States of the subregion.

We must emphasize that the idea of a moratorium was raised at the conference on the prevention of conflicts, disarmament and development in West Africa, held in Mali from 25 to 29 November 1996, in which some 10 or so West African countries participated.

Participation in the moratorium is to be voluntary and open to all African States. If a State wishes to terminate its participation at any time, it need only inform the other participants. However, the States that wish to participate in the moratorium will need a coordinating mechanism for notification and technical assistance and for harmonizing and implementing joint measures within the context of a programme of coordination and assistance for disarmament and security.

My delegation is pleased to note that the decisions reached at the ministerial consultations held in the context of Mali's "Peace Week" from 24-28 March 1997 are fully in keeping with the conclusions of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms as concerns the analysis of the causes of their proliferation, the nature of the problem and relevant recommendations.

In addition, in the framework of the implementation of the recommendations made by the consultative mission of the Secretary-General, the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, created, by statutory order 96-304 P-RM dated 14 November 1996, a national commission to combat the proliferation of light weapons. That commission, which is now operational, is mandated to help the President formulate and implement national policies on the struggle against the proliferation of light weapons. It will require the support of the international community in its efforts to combat the proliferation of small weapons — a prerequisite if the many urgent tasks facing Mali in its economic and social development process are to be carried out.

I should like to conclude by quoting the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, speaking at the opening ceremonies of "Peace Week" in Bamako on 24 March last:

> "We make peace primarily for ourselves. We must pay for peace, and not be made to pay for peace. The requirements of international solidarity are based on that principle. Peace and peace alone — nothing other than peace, but a peace that is complete. May the 'Flame of Peace' illuminate our entire continent and bring light to the hearts and minds of all peoples."

Mr. Lopez (Philippines): On behalf of the Philippine delegation, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. The Philippines is also heartened to see that you will be ably assisted in your task by the members of your Bureau, some of whom have been most helpful, on many occasions, to my delegation. I am confident that under your wise leadership, our work will be completed successfully. I should like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

True to the hopes and dreams of the first few years after the end of the cold war — to a certain extent — major gains were made in the area of disarmament. Today we have a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and an indefinitely extended Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nuclear-weapon-free zones cover large parts of the world. We have an authoritative legal determination by the International Court of Justice that States are under an obligation to negotiate an end to nuclear weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention is in force, and we are enhancing the Biological Weapons Convention. After strengthening the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, we drafted an international treaty banning anti-personnel landmines, which will be open for signature in December.

But the hope and dream of a world free from weapons of mass destruction cannot fully be realized until true and meaningful nuclear disarmament is achieved. We must build on our achievements, or our hopes and dreams will remain unfulfilled.

In these changing times, calling for true nuclear disarmament is not entirely unreasonable, though some have criticized the Non-Aligned Movement as being unreasonable for the manner and form in which it has been calling for an end to nuclear weapons. But has the non-aligned world been reasonable? The portrayal of unreasonableness may be a bit too exaggerated. We can

hardly be considered unreasonable when the obligation to rid the world of nuclear weapons has been in the NPT for three decades and was confirmed by the International Court of Justice last year. We can hardly be considered unreasonable when in reality, those who have been advocating true and meaningful nuclear disarmament have been open to compromise. From the NPT to the CTBT, disarmament has given way to non-proliferation.

Admittedly, these compromises have been difficult and to some extent painful. They have brought us to the brink of nuclear disarmament, but never over it. We have made these compromises but made it clear that these are steps forward — bits and pieces that we can build on. And so we must move on. We should now be working on creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. We must work towards halting all qualitative and quantitative development of nuclear weapons and the destruction and elimination of all existing nuclear weapons.

In this regard, we must welcome the positive developments in unilateral and bilateral nuclear disarmament. We must toot our own horn, too, over our efforts at nuclear disarmament as non-nuclear-weapon States. On 27 May of this year, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty entered into force. On that day, the world became even smaller for nuclear weapons. On that day, the countries of my region joined the States parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and the Antarctic Treaty in taking regional strides towards eventually ridding the world of nuclear weapons. On that day, the declared policy enshrined in the Constitution of the Philippines of freedom from nuclear weapons found greater meaning.

We believe that our efforts should not end with these achievements. Once again our Committee will be considering a draft resolution on a nuclear-weapons-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas. We strongly support this draft resolution and congratulate Brazil and its other proponents. We hope that in considering this draft resolution, we in our Committee decide to strengthen it rather than compromise and weaken it.

Compromise was not the norm in the recently concluded negotiations on banning anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa process has stood fast and resisted compromises that would have betrayed the humanitarian imperative to ban these insidious weapons. The Philippines will sign that agreement in December, and we call on all others to do likewise.

In the Philippines, we are preparing legislation that would criminalize the possession, use of or trade in anti-personnel mines and their parts. This legislation would transcend the usual territorial application of our laws and apply to any violation anywhere in the world as long as a domestic element or link is present.

International efforts to reduce the illicit movement of arms, particularly small arms, have yielded in dividends of peace in my country. Armed secession has ended and violent rebellion is about to come to an end in the Philippines thanks in no small measure to the concerted efforts of States to restrict the movement of small arms. However, many regional and internal conflicts endure in other parts of the world and the ability to obtain arms illicitly continues to be a major factor in these conflicts. We must continue our efforts to address this critical issue.

One way that we have succeeded in restricting the movement of arms and in building regional trust and confidence has been through transparency in arms and in military budgets. The Philippines believes that transparency continues to be an important element, not only in disarmament, but in maintaining peace and stability, and fully supports the work of our Committee on transparency.

Aside from transparency, regional peace and stability have also been enhanced by opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue on disarmament and security. My region is particularly thankful for the determined efforts of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific to bring together the people of my region, as well as experts and interested groups, to talk about disarmament and peace in Asia and the Pacific. We see the work of the Centre as an important contribution to maintaining peace in my region and pledge our continued support for the Centre.

Recent developments and our own efforts at disarmament on both conventional and non-conventional weapons reflect an unmistakable global movement and momentum. That momentum may be placed in serious jeopardy by something more than the usual resistance put up by those opposed to true and meaningful disarmament. The reform fever has hit our Committee. Perhaps it was inevitable that our Committee would be drawn into the reform debate that has plagued the rest of the United Nations.

We are for reform. Our experience in the Philippines has taught us that authentic reform is good. After regaining our democracy less than a decade ago, our legislative

agenda has been geared towards instituting democratic, political, economic and social reforms, and has met with much success. But if the issue of reforming structures and approaches relating to disarmament and international security results in bringing the momentum of the last few years to a screeching halt, then we urge caution.

If States, particularly those with scarce human and material resources devoted to disarmament, are to be diverted from making meaningful efforts towards disarmament by endless discussions and disagreements on reform, then we ask for prudence. If the attempt to inject reform into disarmament is an intentional and clever ploy to distract and delay, and if impressive resources and irresistible forces are brought into play in implementing this ploy, then we might as well invoke divine intervention.

I think we have to ask some rather fundamental questions. First and foremost, what exactly is wrong and in need of reform in our work? Admittedly, ours is an imperfect institution. And it may be that the difficulties we have been having are a result of virtually immutable political realities rather than of structural reasons.

Some specific changes have been proposed and some suggestions made. Perhaps we should reflect on these suggestions in the light of what faced us in the past and with some benefit of hindsight. The questions we must ask, then, are: Would these proposed changes have made a better and truly comprehensive CTBT? Would these suggested modifications have made the United Nations more responsive to the resonant call to ban anti-personnel mines? Would these contemplated transformations have made a substantial difference in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons?

The Group of 21 in Geneva and the Non-Aligned Movement have responded to these suggestions in separate papers. These papers reflect many of the fundamental issues that any discussion of reform in disarmament should take into account. The Philippines supports these views.

We are not entirely unpragmatic about reforming disarmament. If the price of genuine and meaningful reform that will move disarmament forward is to put a virtual hold on disarmament in the meantime, perhaps we must be ready to pay it. But if we were to detract, even ever so slightly, from our disarmament efforts in order to deal with reform and true reform were not forthcoming, then that would change things altogether. The need to pursue disarmament is too urgent. The stakes are far too high.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus): On the threshold of the third millennium, humankind has acquired a rich and constructive, though uneasy, experience in the fields of disarmament and maintaining international peace and security. A basic system of multilateral and bilateral measures designed to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security has been established, allowing us to meet the most dire challenges of the second half of the twentieth century.

At the same time there, is hardly any ground for complacency. The effectiveness of the disarmament measures already in place should be further enhanced. The pivotal role of the United Nations and multilateral diplomacy in disarmament efforts needs to be consolidated. Actions to prevent the emergence of new types of weapons of mass destruction, to develop nuclear disarmament and to ensure the effective solution of many conventional disarmament issues are badly needed. Neither regional disarmament measures, nor the universality of conventions now in effect or the interrelation between disarmament and development, alongside many other issues, should escape our attention.

Signed last 26 September in New York by the Foreign Ministers of Belarus, Kazakstan, Russia and Ukraine and the United States Secretary of State, the package of significant agreements related to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) of 26 May, 1972, was the crowning success of more than four years of negotiations in Geneva on anti-ballistic missiles and related issues and was, we are convinced, a major event of the current year in disarmament that chronologically and politically coincided with the opening of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The signed Memorandum of Understanding on succession preserved the viability of the ABM Treaty, which is a cornerstone for preventing the arms race, and ensured the transition of the Treaty from the former bilateral format to a new multilateral environment. The package of documents includes the statement by the Republic of Belarus on plans with respect to systems to counter ballistic missiles other than strategic ballistic missiles. Belarus welcomes the fact that, on the same day, the Russian Foreign Minister and the United States Secretary of State signed a Protocol to START II and exchanged letters on early deactivation, which opens up new perspectives for the prompt commencement of START III.

Another recent historic event is the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which finalized a four-year negotiation process on an issue of prime importance. The significance of the Treaty is not limited, in our view, to effectively enhancing nuclear non-proliferation, putting a reliable brake on the qualitative perfection of nuclear weapons and boosting the negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

In the view of Belarus, this Treaty is yet another substantive proof of the importance of multilateral diplomacy in disarmament. Global challenges should be matched by global action. The universality of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a must for ensuring their viability and effectiveness. Ensuring their universality should be among the priorities of the United Nations. We call on all Member States, in particular the so-called threshold countries that have not yet done so, to accede to the NPT and to the CTBT as early as possible.

Today, issues relating to the CTBT Organization and to ensuring effective commencement of its activities have come to the fore. I would like to underscore in this respect that recruitment of staff members for its secretariat at all levels and at all stages should be a transparent procedure. Staffing should be done in a balanced way, without professional posts being monopolized by a single group of participating States. Regional quotas should be established for that purpose.

It is a matter of principle to ensure CTBT verification by competent international agencies as well as on-site visits with a view to monitoring implementation. Regulations on the monitoring procedures for CTBT implementation and eventual sanctions to be imposed in case of a violation of Treaty provisions should be worked out. Also, among the priorities is to define the objectives of international monitoring.

I would like to use this opportunity to commend the important work being done by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in respect of nuclear non-proliferation and of the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Belarus is an active proponent of such efforts by the IAEA.

Against the general backdrop of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world, the recent practical steps taken by Belarus in nuclear disarmament constitute important prerequisites for renewed efforts to strengthen nuclear security in the centre of Europe. The initiative launched by the President of Belarus, Mr. Alyaksandr Lukashenka, to establish a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central and Eastern Europe, which was further developed by the Minsk international conference on that subject last April, has, we believe, a cornerstone potential for political and military stabilization in that important and sensitive region in the post-cold-war period. We do not intend to impose on anyone ready-made patterns of how to implement the idea. In the same vein, stonewalling on this idea by resorting to patterns tailored for the cold war seems hardly appropriate. We anticipate that this initiative advanced by Belarus will be evolving along with the development of the very circumstances that brought it to light. By the same token, we hope that the current policies of European and other interested States will develop accordingly.

Belarus welcomes as a 1997 event of prime importance in disarmament the establishment last May of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We appreciate the election of Belarus to its Executive Council, and take very seriously the responsibility that this entails. I would like to note an encouraging trend: the growing number of participating States that have already ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and the practical measures undertaken to initiate the inspection procedures envisaged by the Convention.

Belarus followed the efforts undertaken, *inter alia*, at the Oslo conference on banning anti-personnel mines. We would consider it more appropriate, though, to conduct negotiations in this respect within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, for instance as an additional instrument to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. In any case, I would like to reaffirm that Belarus has not contributed, is not contributing and will not contribute to the international proliferation of this type of weapon. We are observing a moratorium on their export.

Shaping a viable system of international security obviously requires agreed international procedures both in monitoring the implementation of concluded agreements now in effect, and in monitoring new weapons of mass destruction with a view to preventing their development and deployment.

We are fully aware that the scope of outstanding problems on whose solution the feasibility of the new system of international security depends remains vast. New challenges have crystallized in addition to the old ones. Among them are international terrorism, illicit arms transfers and their destabilizing effect on the situation in different regions of the world, transnational crime and many other problems that can be solved only through concerted efforts of all States. Belarus is open to such interaction with all States, on both a multilateral and a bilateral basis.

Among the new challenges that require the serious, businesslike attention of the international community are those of adjusting some previously concluded agreements and treaties on disarmament — specifically the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe — and of assisting countries whose economies are subject to disproportionately heavy stress as a result of the elimination of conventional arms. As we have learned from our own experience in Belarus, disarmament-related environmental problems are extremely acute, above all those that pertain to intensive military-industrial complex conversion and to the elimination of weapons. Belarus is thus in favour of supplementing the draft code of crimes against the peace and security of mankind with provisions pertaining to premeditated and severe damage to the environment.

Europe is now at a crucial crossroads. Entirely dependent on the direction it will follow is the success or failure of its efforts to construct a truly common and undivided security architecture in that region of the world in the twenty-first century. Belarus is deeply convinced that in constructing the new security architecture, we need to abide by such principles as universality, due account for the justified security concerns of all countries involved and the renunciation of old dividing lines and prevention of the emergence of new ones. The opposite would threaten collapse. Having lost one third of its people under the debris of the Treaties of Versailles, the League of Nations and Munich, Belarus does not wish the past to be repeated.

We are ready for equal interaction and partnership along all geographical and political lines, from the Commonwealth of Independent States to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to attain these objectives and principles. Situated at a sensitive and strategically important crossroads, Belarus needs borders of transparency and cooperation, not borders of confrontation.

Practical steps undertaken by Belarus in nuclear and conventional disarmament, our participation in the Partnership for Peace and our support for a European security charter are all a substantive manifestation of our readiness to contribute to the construction of the new European security architecture.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize once again that the Belarus delegation will do it utmost to facilitate constructive results in the work of the First Committee and to facilitate your efforts towards that goal. It is the logic of our own practical steps along the major avenues of disarmament and international peace and security that prompts us to do so.

Mr. Wilmot (Ghana): Mr. Chairman, my delegation congratulates you and your fellow officers on your election to steer the affairs of the First Committee. We pledge our cooperation in the exercise of your responsibilities.

Several speakers have referred to achievements in the disarmament and related fields over the past two years. We note in this respect the adoption and signature by several States of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996; the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in April this year; the establishment of the provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBT; and, last but not least, the Ottawa process and the adoption in Oslo of a Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines.

While we, like others, appreciate those developments, we note with regret the failure of the international community to make progress in negotiations for a universally binding treaty on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In the Disarmament Commission, the nuclear-weapon States have virtually killed any meaningful discussions on the subject of nuclear disarmament. Similarly, at the Conference on Disarmament, for the same reasons, wide support for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament has failed to translate into reality, as reflected once more in the report (A/52/27) of the Conference, which is before the Committee. The question of nuclear weapons is of global interest, and it is a matter of concern that some nuclear-weapon States should continue to exert pressure in this post-cold-war era to remove it from the multilateral agenda.

In its resolution 35/46 declaring the 1980s as the Second Disarmament Decade, the General Assembly rightly stated:

> "Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to mankind and to the survival of civilization." [resolution 35/46, annex, para. 17]

Whatever justification might have been advanced during the cold war to hold onto this category of weapons, it can no longer be pleaded in the current international security situation.

We draw attention to the final document of the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement Of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New Delhi, India, in April this year, which states:

> "with the end of the cold war, there is no justification for nuclear arsenals, or concepts of international security based on promoting military alliances and policies of nuclear deterrence." [A/51/912, annex, para. 54]

We therefore call on the nuclear-weapon States to give up outdated doctrines of nuclear deterrence and cooperate with the wider international community to address the important question of nuclear disarmament in the appropriate multilateral deliberating and negotiating forums, where it rightly belongs.

In this respect, we wish to reiterate our support for the Proposal for a Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons presented to the Conference on Disarmament in 1996 by the Group of 21. We consider that proposal a step in the right direction and hope that the Conference on Disarmament will soon set up an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations thereon.

The vast majority of States in the southern hemisphere have confirmed their commitment to nuclear disarmament by adhering to nuclear-weapon-free zones. From Tlatelolco to Rarotonga, Pelindaba, Bangkok and the Antarctic, our countries have exercised that right, recognized under article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), by adhering to these zones. It is in the same spirit that we call on the nuclear-weapon States to respect their commitment under article I of the Treaty to avoid both vertical and horizontal proliferation and also to join us in the execution of our joint responsibility under article VI to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament, and to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The continued validity of this obligation was confirmed as recently as 1996 in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice to which many have referred during this debate.

We call on the nuclear-weapon States which fought hard in 1995 for the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to respect its provisions in their entirety, to facilitate the availability of nuclear technology for peaceful uses and to pursue action in furtherance of the Treaty's ultimate objective, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

My country supports the strengthened International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards arrangements. We have very fruitful cooperation with the Agency, to which we are grateful for its invaluable contribution to our efforts to harness nuclear technology in various areas of national life, including health, agriculture and industry. We were therefore pleased to be elected to the Agency's Board of Governors early this month. It is our hope that in the exercise of our responsibilities within the Board we will further strengthen our relations with the Agency and contribute effectively to the achievement of its objectives. I take this opportunity to thank all friendly States for their confidence and support at the elections in Vienna.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention on 29 April this year opens a new era in disarmament, given its objective to prohibit the development, production, stockpiling and use of this category of weapons and to destroy existing stockpiles. My country has ratified the Treaty, and we hope that countries which have not yet done so will ratify soon, to give this comprehensive Treaty the universality required to guarantee its effectiveness and credibility.

Weapons of mass destruction rightly deserve the attention given them in international forums. We are, however, also cognizant of the havoc caused by conventional arms in the numerous internal conflicts that continue to rage in various regions of the world, as noted by the Secretary-General in his note [A/52/298] on small arms. The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons fuels these conflicts and facilitates criminal and terrorist activities. We commend the United Nations for its assistance in some post-conflict areas in the collection and restriction of the circulation of such arms.

The indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines is also a great source of concern to the international community. These landmines continue to kill and maim innocent persons and to disrupt normal economic activity in infested areas long after the termination of conflicts during

which they were laid. We are pleased at the near international consensus to curb their indiscriminate use and to ban them altogether. We therefore support the Ottawa process and the adoption in Oslo last month of the Convention on landmines, and we call on the few countries which are still stalling over the process to come on board. We invite the United Nations and the international community at large to continue to mobilize resources in support of intensified demining activities and for assistance to mine victims.

Reform is in the air, and I would wish to commend the Secretary-General for the proposal in the reform package to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, under the direction of an Under-Secretary-General. We are particularly pleased that in his clarification of this proposal, contained in document A/52/CRP.3, he reiterated the high priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament. It is our hope that the new Department will pursue with diligence the mandate assigned to the Secretariat by the General Assembly and that it will continue to cooperate closely with delegations in furtherance of the principal Charter objective of maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Al-Dayel (Saudi Arabia)(*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Wishing you every success, I am confident, given your skills and expertise, that you will conduct the work of this Committee in a manner that will help us achieve the desired fruitful results. I would also like to assure you of my country's readiness to cooperate with you in order to reach a successful conclusion of our work.

International and regional efforts to achieve disarmament arouse our hopes and optimism regarding increasing international awareness of the need to rid the world completely of all types of weapons, because they threaten international peace and security. Given Saudi Arabia's commitment to the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international legitimacy which are the cornerstones of our foreign policy, the Kingdom pays special attention to strengthening the role of the United Nations in all aspects, especially those relating to international peace and security and disarmament. This is due to Saudi Arabia's belief that these issues are indivisible; the world cannot live in peace or stability without them.

Because of Saudi Arabia's consistent position of calling for security for all, and with a view to contributing to international efforts to eliminate, once and for all, all weapons of mass destruction from all regions of the world, the Kingdom has emphasized its refusal to enter into the nuclear arms race or into the production of nuclear weapons. It was in the forefront of the States that signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and called for the destruction of such weapons. It also acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Moreover, it has refrained from producing or acquiring nuclear weapons or explosive nuclear devices, and it does not allow any third party to place nuclear weapons on its soil. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia actively participated in the 1995 Conference in New York on the future of the Proliferation Treaty. In addition, it has adopted a positive position vis-à-vis the endeavours to reach a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests. It is also a member of the Executive Council of the Chemical Weapons Convention Organization.

The Kingdom has also praised the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 to the effect that all States should be committed to continue negotiations in good faith for the total elimination of nuclear weapons under strict and effective international supervision. The Kingdom also actively participated in the efforts of the Arab League, through the technical committee entrusted with elaborating a draft convention, to make the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction. These efforts and positions truly prove our good intentions regarding disarmament and international security, in addition to creating a secure international environment, free from nuclear and other destructive weapons.

Success in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in certain parts of the world, thanks to the cooperation between the countries involved and their belief in peaceful coexistence, constitutes a positive step towards creating a world free from weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, the Middle East region is not free from nuclear weapons, because of Israel's refusal to create such a zone. Despite its ostensible support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and for General Assembly resolutions on this score, Israel still places obstacles in the way to implementing them — by linking any treatment of nuclear weapons in the region to a peace process and comprehensive negotiations in which all parties take part. Israel still rejects the appeals made by the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the

Islamic Conference (OIC) that it desist from developing, testing or producing nuclear weapons. In addition, Israel refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or to subject its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards. It manifests no enthusiasm for creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Israel is the only State in the region which possesses nuclear weapons and programmes, as well as chemical weapons outside international supervision.

The Israeli position vis-à-vis creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and Israel's excuses for not joining the NPT run clearly and openly counter to its claims about peace. Real peace should be based on confidence and good intentions among and between the countries and peoples of the region — not on the possession of nuclear weapons, or the threat of their use, and attempts to impose hegemonic policies on other countries. Such policies will not only be a source of concern and threat to the peoples of the region, but will also destabilize international peace and security.

The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports all United Nations efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It also calls on the only State in the region that has not done so — Israel — to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to take the necessary steps to act in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. All Israeli nuclear activities should be subjected to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency in order that the Middle East region becomes free from all weapons of mass destruction and from nuclear weapons.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates the call of the members of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Secretary-General for transparency in the field of armaments. That is due to the fact that transparency in armaments is one of the basic means of achieving international peace and security. The success of any mechanism for transparency should be established on a balanced, comprehensive and indiscriminate foundation. In addition, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should include information about weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, as well as advanced technology which has military applications. Furthermore, the Register does not take into consideration the situation in the Middle East, which is characterized by a lack of qualitative balance in the field of armament, because Israel possesses nuclear weapons, which are a threat to peace and security in the region.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its hopes and aspirations for establishing an international community in which peace, stability, and peaceful coexistence prevail for the good of all humankind.

Mr. Mallam Daouda (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, allow me on behalf of the delegation of Niger to associate myself with the well-deserved congratulations that have been extended to you and to the other members of the Bureau who are so effectively helping you to carry out your important work.

My delegation welcomes this opportunity to speak on the agenda items relating to the question of disarmament.

Faithful to the lofty ideals of international peace and security contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the Niger has always worked towards general and complete disarmament. In this regard I should like to recall that my country is a party to several of the most significant international instruments, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the treaty banning nuclear weapons. The Niger is therefore gratified by the conclusion at the regional level of the Treaty for the denuclearization of Africa.

Armed conflicts and political upheavals have caused the proliferation in Africa of illegal weapons of all types, which are being used to kill the women, children and men of the continent. Although it is not an arms producer, Africa remains the major victim of these deadly devices. Deeply convinced that the consolidation of peace and security also hinges on the taking of specific measures for disarmament, in particular control of small-calibre and light weapons, the Niger has joined the United Nations and certain neighbouring countries to carry out comprehensive action to combat the scourge of the illegal arms trade.

At the domestic level, in addition to national legislation regarding the import and possession of firearms that severely punishes any violation of the law, in 1994 the Niger established a National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illegal Weapons. This Commission, which is designed to end the insecurity resulting from the circulation and proliferation of small arms in Niger, has already achieved convincing results in its task of disarming populations, as the United Nations Advisory Mission was

able to note in March 1995 with regard to the proliferation of illegal small arms in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion.

However, considerable efforts must still be made because of the magnitude of this phenomenon and the lack of the material means required in the struggle against this scourge. In this regard, the assistance of the United Nations and the international community is more necessary than ever in order to establish lasting security conditions because — this cannot be stressed enough — without security there can be no development. My country already expects a great deal from the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Mission with regard to the settlement of the disarmament issue in the Saharo-Sahelian subregion.

Although it produces uranium, the Niger, which is a developing country, does not have any facilities for the production of nuclear, biological, chemical or light weapons. Neither does it have an armament programme or institutions for nuclear research. Also, desirous of contributing to effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of all threats to peace in accordance with Article I, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter, my country has become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention. A national authority, which will serve as a national monitoring body, will be established to ensure the implementation of that Convention.

My country welcomed the adoption in Oslo last September of an international Convention to ban anti-personnel landmines. All practical provisions have already been made by the competent authorities in the Niger in order to sign in Ottawa the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Concerned about the need for transparency in the field of armaments, every year the Niger provides the United Nations Secretariat with a list of armaments with which the armed forces of the Niger are equipped. Furthermore, this list remains unchanging with regard to armed vehicles and high-calibre artillery systems, as the Niger does not have the necessary financial resources to purchase very expensive weapons.

Since it has a small army of 10,000 men for an area of 1,267,000 square kilometres, the Niger has set as its priority economic and social development rather than taking part in an arms race of no interest to a country battling extreme poverty. It is important to point out that most of the light weapons and few artillery pieces used by the Niger armed forces are gifts from friendly countries.

Although it is not involved in the notification of nuclear tests, the Niger fears that its vast desert territory might be used, without its knowledge, by nuclear Powers for the dumping of radioactive waste. That is why, concerned that there be sound and safe management of radioactive wastes, the Niger has ratified the Bamako Convention and is about to accede to the Basel Convention as well as to an international Convention initiated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) dealing with the safe management of nuclear and toxic wastes.

In sum, the Niger's defence policies are characterized above all by a firm desire to establish relationships of good neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence with all neighbouring countries and with all peace- and justice-loving States in the world.

This attitude is given concrete expression in the concern which the Niger has always demonstrated to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of other States; to coexist peacefully with all neighbouring countries and to be willing to offer mediation in cases of conflicts between States; to consult neighbouring States with a view to reaching agreement on defining national borders; to cooperate with all States, with reciprocal respect for sovereignty; to honour all its international commitments; to work resolutely to apply a policy of non-aggression, through adherence to subregional and regional organizations for integration and defence; and to contribute to the establishment of international peacekeeping forces by contributing military contingents.

Doing all of that obviously requires support from the international community — bilateral and multilateral partners — which must take security aspects into account in their development assistance policy. Only thus can we together make progress towards building a safer world, a world of peace and progress, to which our peoples aspire.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (Gabon) *(interpretation from French)*: My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the proceedings of the First Committee, and takes this opportunity to congratulate you warmly on your election. We are convinced that your experience and great competence augur well for the success of our deliberations. I can assure you of our complete readiness to cooperate to ensure the success of your work. We also wish to congratulate the other officers of the Committee.

To your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou of Belarus, I should like to express my admiration for the excellent way in which he performed his duty.

While it is quite in order to give priority to the nuclear disarmament items on our agenda, the bloody experience of the last decade reminds us that conventional disarmament is essential, particularly because of the current destabilizing proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

I shall deal first with nuclear disarmament, where at least two reasons come to mind to continue to justify a sense of urgency. First, more than any other weapon, nuclear weapons are an immeasurable threat to humanity and the survival of civilization. Their capacity for worldwide destruction remains unequalled. Secondly, there are so far no measures for systematically eliminating the nuclear weapons that have been accumulated.

In saying this, my delegation does not ignore the validity and importance of the agreements already concluded, or about to be concluded, to control or halt the nuclear arms race, whether bilateral agreements, such as the START series, or multilateral, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — a Treaty that my delegation is very pleased to see extended indefinitely. But as long as there persists a stubborn desire to keep weapons whose terrifying and no less cumbersome character it is difficult to ignore, we will be far from having nuclear disarmament worthy of the name.

The Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* remains relevant, and obliges the nuclear Powers to respect the commitments they have made under article VI of the NPT.

The conclusions on the future of nuclear weapons reached by institutions such as Pugwash, the Canberra Committee or the Committee on International Security and Arms Control of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States are particularly encouraging. These authoritative conclusions argue for the elimination of existing nuclear weapons and the adoption of strict international control to invalidate the possession of nuclear weapons as a means of maintaining national or international security.

All these studies, which have both scientific and moral value, demonstrate that with the political will we could totally eliminate nuclear weapons, without affecting major strategic balances, and preserve and strengthen international peace and security.

The enthusiasm aroused by these valuable contributions to the cause of nuclear disarmament contrasts, unfortunately, with the bogging down of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is particularly concerned by the way in which the present deadlock has taken hostage the singular aspiration of the international community to see a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is regrettable that none of the eight points in the programme of work of the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body has resulted in agreement among its members. This record of failure is a challenge to us all.

What would have become of the efforts to achieve agreement on banning anti-personnel landmines if the valuable Ottawa process, to which my country is party, had had to wait for the conclusion of a preliminary agreement within the Conference on Disarmament? Everyone will readily understand the questions raised here by several delegations regarding the legitimacy of this body, whose significance is still indisputable.

The numerous threats facing the world demand increased, concerted, international action, particularly to eliminate the underlying causes of instability and the proliferation of armed conflicts throughout the world.

In this context, my delegation welcomes the reform proposal made by the Secretary-General to turn the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. It is of the utmost importance that every aspect of the question of disarmament receive the appropriate attention of the United Nations Secretariat. This is in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, such a measure would enhance the capacity of the Secretariat to respond to the numerous appeals made by Member States. The work of our Committee will be thus revitalized.

At the present stage of international relations, States should be encouraged to break with the trend of tackling only disarmament issues that relate to the overriding needs of national security, however legitimate they may be. This also holds true for all weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

How can we effectively maintain international peace and security if nothing is done to reverse the proliferation

of all types of weapons? Therefore, we must concern ourselves with the category of weapons that fuel armed conflict throughout the world.

The excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of light or small-calibre weapons fuels a host of conflicts that cause many humanitarian tragedies. The international community must act responsibly in the light of the persistence of this situation.

It is a commonplace to maintain that weapons do not cause wars, but their excessive accumulation in tense and unstable zones often promotes the use of armed violence as a way of resolving political disputes. The correlation between the proliferation of light or small-calibre weapons and the exacerbation of armed conflict no longer needs to be proved.

Guidelines for international arms transfers adopted by consensus during the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1996 and the most recent recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms can contribute to the adoption of a binding international instrument to control the transfer of such weapons.

However, if we are to establish this standard-setting framework, which is still sadly lacking, it is of the utmost importance to take specific disarmament measures wherever they may prove necessary. My delegation will continue to support the German initiative on this issue.

Since factors that destabilize national, subregional and international peace and security are on the increase, the promotion of preventive diplomacy must be one of the central elements of the international community's efforts to promote peace. Efforts to maintain peace throughout the world must, more than ever before, incorporate all the potential of preventive diplomacy.

In that context, since 1992, 11 countries of the Central African subregion - Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Gabon - which are all on the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, have embarked on a process of mutual dialogue to strengthen confidence-building measures within and between States as a way of building lasting peace.

In order to continue to transform this will into concrete action, the member countries of the Advisory Committee, which met in Libreville from 7 to 11 July adopted a plan of action aimed, *inter alia*, at establishing an early-warning mechanism before the end of 1997 to help prevent armed conflict in Central Africa. Details on the important measures the Committee has adopted are contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Committee (A/52/293).

With regard to the confidence-building measures they are trying to establish, the countries of the Standing Advisory Committee are planning a subregional conference on the subject of democratic institutions and peace in Central Africa, which will be held between now and December in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

I should like to inform the Committee that at the invitation of the Government of Gabon, the representatives of four of the five countries that are permanent members of the Security Council - China, the United States of America, the Russian Federation and France - took part in the ninth ministerial meeting of the Advisory Committee. The very useful exchange of views they had with the members of the Committee gave them ideas on how to step up cooperation between the Security Council and the countries of the subregion.

The representatives of the permanent Members of the Security Council, moreover, indicated their willingness to assist the countries of the subregion in strengthening their peacekeeping capacity - not only after the fact, but also, and especially, beforehand — by supporting efforts made by the countries that are members of the Committee to prevent new armed conflicts from breaking out in Central Africa.

There is no need to recall the indivisible nature of peace and security to justify the need for genuine solidarity and continued support for the efforts of the countries on the Committee to restore a climate of confidence in the subregion. I welcome the growing number of States that are showing a genuine interest in the activities of the Committee. On behalf of the member countries of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which my country is now chairing, I should like to express sincere gratitude to States that are already kindly contributing to the implementation of the Committee's programme of work. Any new voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to finance the activities of the Committee will be most appreciated by its members.

In due course, we shall be submitting a draft resolution to the Committee which will spell out the kinds of activities the Committee envisages to bring about lasting peace and stability in Central Africa.

Since major tensions persist in our subregion, the dynamic action of the Advisory Committee should be maintained and supported.

The subregional aspect of disarmament, both conventional and nuclear, is in fact a pivotal element for building global peace. This is why my delegation remains convinced of the need to support the activities of the United Nations Regional Centres for disarmament in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that the promotion of disarmament at the regional level is indivisible from the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones. In fact, nuclear-weapon-free zones are an essential category of disarmament as a whole throughout the world. We need to strive to create more of them, as they contribute significantly to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament at the regional and international levels - and why not at the national level? Has anyone ever thought what a boost to the cause of nuclear disarmament it would be if a nuclear-weapon State were to declare its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone? This highlights the merits of the initiative taken by Mongolia, though for its own reasons.

The prospects for general and complete disarmament are positive, and we need to encourage them and work together to make them a reality. This often requires long and laborious preparatory work, as is the case of the negotiations now under way on a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention. In the complex area of verification, which is a critical factor for confidence-building and real disarmament, my delegation is also convinced of the need to create an international body under the auspices of the United Nations to coordinate and implement the choices made in this area by the international community.

Efforts under way to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime are on the right track. This is why everything should be done to ensure their universality.

The adoption last year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has now been signed by over 150 countries, is encouraging and should open the way to further progress in the nuclear-disarmament process. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to support the appeal that has been made for the Conference on Disarmament to begin, when its work resumes, negotiations designed to lead to the conclusion of a treaty on halting the production of fissile materials for military purposes, with the understanding that the agreement would take account of existing stocks. Logically, this new treaty, combined with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, should put an end, once and for all, to the production of new nuclear weapons.

In this connection, the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction should be strengthened, above all since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It would be a noteworthy event if the Russian Federation, following the United States of America, were to accede to this important instrument.

Although the deliberations of the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission did not reach consensus on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, my delegation remains convinced of the great need to hold the session.

Moreover, that view is shared by the majority of us, since, in agreement on the principle of holding it, we were not far from reaching an understanding on its modalities. Given the magnitude of the task before us, it is the responsibility of all to work towards consensus to make the session possible.

We must admit that it would be very disconcerting if, despite the present favourable circumstances, negotiations for general and complete disarmament were to produce no better results than those obtained during the cold war.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.